

A COMPREHENSIVE AND INTEGRATED USE OF FORCE TRAINING PROGRAM

Article

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Police everywhere have been placed under the proverbial microscope when it comes to the use of force. It is difficult to forget the highly televised Rodney King incident. Opinions will differ greatly over the appropriateness of the force used by the officers and it is certainly not the intent here to judge the actions of those officers. What is indisputable is that the Rodney King incident did more to bring public focus on the use of force by police than any other incident in recent memory.

Putting aside all the negative outcomes of the Rodney King incident, it did result in many positive changes for law enforcement across the state of California. Like other professions that have had to endure the blistering complaints of an angry community, law enforcement has had to learn to adapt and change. The manner in which a law enforcement executive responds to an incident involving an allegation of excessive force is extremely important and can have a significant impact upon the agency. Many years of good policing and community trust can be jeopardized by a single act or the perception of excessive force by an officer.

In order to develop a comprehensive and integrated use of force program, law enforcement must first examine the contacts and circumstances surrounding allegations of excessive force by police officers. In most cases, the vast majority of police contacts result in little or no force used. Additionally, most police encounters involve compliant and cooperative individuals. The use of force by a police officer occurs in less than one percent of all contacts.¹

Allegations of police brutality have become the focus of acute national attention during the past several years due to several high profile cases, including the fatal shooting of an unarmed West African immigrant, Amadou Diallo, in New York City in February

1999.² Four white officers from an elite crime detail confronted a rape suspect and fired 41 shots at Diallo, striking him 19 times as he stood outside his apartment building. The tactics used by the crime detail was an issue; however, of greater concern was the perception of police racial profiling of black people and other minorities.

An estimated 43.8 million people 16 years and older, or about 21 percent of the population have had contact with a police officer.³ In a comprehensive analysis of police contacts, the analysis found that less than one percent of the contacts resulted in police force or threat of force. An estimated 20 percent of such incidents involved only the threat to use force.⁴

Research has found that more than half of all police contacts have occurred during traffic stops. An estimated 10 percent of all licensed drivers, including almost 20 percent of teenage drivers, have been pulled over by law enforcement officers. Eighty-four percent of the drivers said they were stopped for a legitimate reason and 90 percent said the police officers treated them fairly and were professional during the stop.⁵ Public interaction with police occurred for the following reasons:

Type of Contact	Percentage
Traffic stops	52%
Citizen reporting a crime	19%
Citizen asking for assistance	12%
Reporting a neighbor problem	9%
Traffic accident	8%
Witness to a traffic accident	5%
Witness to a crime	3%
Questioned as a suspect	3%

Research conducted in 2002 by the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, has revealed, with substantial confidence, that police use of force typically occurs at the lower end of the force continuum, which involves grabbing, pushing, or shoving. The research involved 7,512 adult arrests, which revealed that about 80 percent of arrests in which police used force consisted of weaponless defense tactics. Grabbing was the tactic used about half the time, while only 2 percent of all arrests involved the use of weapons by police. Chemical agents, such as pepper spray, were the weapons most frequently used, while firearms were the least often used.⁶

From a law enforcement administrator's point of view, these findings are predictable. The kind of force that most often arouses the public's concern and criticism involve fatal shootings, severe beatings, and chokeholds, which are not common occurrences. When injuries occur as a result of the force used, they are likely to be minor. The same national study conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice found that the most common injury to a suspect was a bruise or abrasion in almost 48 percent of the incidents. Another fact that was reinforced by the study was that the use of force is more likely to occur when police are dealing with subjects who are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or who are mentally ill. There have been thousands of cases involving the use of force by an officer and the vast majority of them followed the prescribed sequence of control and reasonable force.⁷

The exception is when a suspect's resistance or threat level is high, in which case police officers tend to escalate proportionately to the immediate threat. The conclusion that police are most likely to use force when dealing with criminal suspects, especially

those who are resisting arrest, is based on years of experience, hundreds of reports, and thousands of incidents involving the use of force.

The impact is significant when a community questions the actions of a police officer. When a questionable action weakens the support of a community, it directly impacts the effectiveness of that law enforcement agency. The true value of a comprehensive and integrated use of force training program is a professional, caring, and competent law enforcement agency that serves its community with a passion for excellence.

The issue of police violence is national in scope and reaches people all across this country. For too many people, especially in minority communities, the trust that is so essential to effective policing does not exist because residents believe that police have used excessive force, that law enforcement is too aggressive, that law enforcement is biased, disrespectful, and unfair.⁸

Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States

Goal of Law Enforcement

There are many circumstances during a police officer's career when he may be placed in a situation that requires a certain degree of force. The extent and type of force may be influenced by mere presence, the use of verbal commands, control holds, takedowns, baton, or the use of deadly force. Society as a whole has given law enforcement officers the right and duty to use reasonable force when necessary. However, little direction has been offered in determining what is reasonable or unreasonable; therefore, each situation must be heard on its own merits to determine the reasonableness.

The goal of law enforcement is to generate voluntary compliance. Police officers make several contacts a day with people during both positive and negative situations. As

professionals, there is a hierarchy of options available to compel or persuade others to comply with certain requests.

The objectives in society are best achieved peaceably and officers should strive to minimize the use of force as much as possible. However, it is important to place any use of force application in perspective in order to understand the potential magnitude of a negative outcome. Although opinions may vary as to whether law enforcement is doing everything possible to minimize the use of force, national and state statistics do not support the notion that there is a national or local epidemic of police violence. Another purpose for emphasizing the infrequent nature of police use of force is to heighten the awareness and challenges of trying to master the infrequent events. Obviously the goal is to reduce allegations of excessive force and public perception that police abuse their authority.

Police officers should know and be familiar with force options when verbal commands fail. It is important that trainers prioritize what options are available, while trying to generate voluntary compliance. It is important to control feelings and biases in order to control adverse situations. However, reality requires that in rare circumstances, verbal commands will fail or be inappropriate and force must be applied to control or to stop the life threatening actions of an individual.

Comprehensive and Integrated Use of Force Training Program

An integrated use of force training program is a systematic approach to integrating the taxonomy of educational objectives involving the use of force by police officers. The program should identify the various levels of force and resistance that an officer may encounter during a confrontation. Because of a complex and diverse society,

energy should be focused on training and preparing police officers for what they may encounter during their tour of duty.

What exists is the potential for a deliberate indifference in training and what is reality. There has been a standard and acceptance regarding how training should be performed. The first step towards success is to ignore the old paradigm by taking a different look at how law enforcement has historically performed training. This will enable the power of imagination and vision to guide in the creation of a training program that is specific to the skills required of a police officer.

There are many programs that claim to be integrated; however, they fall short of incorporating the essential skills necessary to show proficiency and competency. It is imperative that an agency provides current, competent, and effective training that will increase an officer's safety in both physical and legal confrontations while better serving the community.

Integrated training is a comprehensive way to develop the decision making skills of an officer, along with the physical ability to use and justify force during realistic confrontations. Additionally, this means that mere presence, verbal communication, empty hand control, electronic devices, intermediate weapons, and deadly force must be integrated into developing a system of defense.

Taxonomy of Educational Objectives an Integrated Training

Taxonomy is defined as the study of the general principles of scientific classification. The concept is to incorporate the adult learning theory of education, which includes those skills within three learning domains.⁹ There are three learning domains that are associated with the use of force by police officers. These domains should be

incorporated into an integrated system that is directly related to their application and environment. The objective of the learning domains is to increase learning and proficiency to its highest level.

The learning domains include:

- Cognitive domain is *knowledge*, facts and information essential to performing a job or task. It is the *knowing* and understanding of specific job functions.
- Psychomotor or manipulative domain involves *skills*, which is the ability to perform physically with proficiency in ways associated with successful job performance.
- Affective domain is feelings and *attitudes* based on performance, which can include ethics, values, and biases.

Essentially, an integrated use of force training program incorporates all three learning domains into the performance objectives of a specific skill. Why is this of value? When you simulate the knowledge, skill, and attitude of an officer in a learning environment, the desired skill is more internalized. Therefore, the specific skill does not diminish as rapidly over time. For example, if a police officer only performs the physical requirements of a control hold, his retention is much less. If the knowledge and attitude learning domains are incorporated into the training it will increase the retention of that skill. All skills are perishable and to reduce this factor it is important to stimulate as many learning domains as possible.

An integrated use of force program is essential so that it may provide current, competent, and effective training that will increase officer safety in both physical and

legal confrontations. An integrated use of force program should strive to integrate the essential skills necessary to demonstrate competency during confrontation simulation. The program should also enhance firearms and weaponless defense skills that will ultimately increase confidence.

Many training programs are fragmented and claim to be integrated with respect to the various levels of force. This simply means that law enforcement performs firearms qualification in one area, weaponless defense in another, and baton training in a third area. Seldom does it successfully integrate the various levels of force in a meaningful manner, which is easily understood and maintained by an officer. The majority of training has focused on the physical skills, hands on, and seldom has included the cognitive skills necessary to be effective and justify the use of force.

The tangible benefits of an integrated use of force training program may be measured in the following areas:

- Reduced allegations of excessive force and citizen's complaints.
- Increasing an officer's ability to make split second decisions when faced with a use of force situation.
- Police officers who are better trained and prepared to make decisions and to use reasonable force.
- Increased officer safety due to a higher degree of knowledge, proficiency, and attitude as it relates to the use of force.
- Reduction in injuries to both officers and suspects.
- Reduction in civil litigation and defense costs.
- Public perception that is favorable and supportive towards law enforcement.

Defensive tactics instructors must include training situations where the appropriate response to the attack is deadly force. Firearm instructors must create situations where chemical agents, empty hand control or intermediate weapons are the appropriate response. Officers must comprehend the use of force spectrum as a daily tool and should be encouraged to make use of all force options.

ENDNOTES

¹ The National Crime Reporting Program administered by the U.S. Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation's study of law enforcement officers killed and assaulted.

² Police Misconduct-Law and Litigation, 3d Ed.

³ Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bsj/>. Site accessed March 2003.

⁵ Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bsj/>. Site accessed March 2003.

⁶ Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bsj/>. Site accessed March 2003.

⁷ Bureau of Justice Statistics, U.S. Department of Justice, available at <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bsj/>. Site accessed March 2003.

⁸ Janet Reno, Attorney General of the United States speaking on police brutality at a National Press Club luncheon, Washington, DC, 15 April 1999.

⁹ Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Mastering the instructional Design Process, a systematic approach.

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HOW WILL AN INTEGRATED USE OF FORCE TRAINING PROGRAM
AFFECT A LARGE URBAN AGENCY
BY 2008?

Abstract by Robert J. Fonzi

This project examines the issue of a comprehensive and integrated use of force training program, which is different from our traditional method of training. Traditional training programs are presented in a fragmented format when it involves the various levels of force. The majority of force training has focused on the physical application or skills, and seldom includes the cognitive skills necessary to demonstrate competency.

Integrated training is a comprehensive way to develop the decision-making process of an officer along with the physical skills required to justify force during realistic encounters. This project has incorporated the taxonomy of educational objectives, which is based on adult learning theory.

The concept incorporates the adult learning theory of educational objectives, which includes skills within three learning domains. The domains are incorporated into an integrated system that is directly related to their application and environment. The objective of the learning domains is to increase learning and proficiency to its highest level.

The project has outlined both a strategic and a transition management plan that may be used as a road map for implementation.